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Toy: Authority Board for DWSD Passed by Senate

Legislation needed to provide safe, steady water supply in a cost efficient manner

LANSING – The Michigan State Senate today passed two pieces of historic legislation to create a five-member authority board for the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD), sponsored by Senator Laura Toy, R-Livonia.

“Senate Bill 195 and House Bill 4206 create an independent, impartial board to oversee the water supply of Detroit Water and Sewerage Department for fair representation of suburban and city customers,” Toy said. “The board is vital to the safety and prosperity of more than 4.3 million customers who need a steady water supply that is cost efficient.”

SB 195 and HB 4206 would create an authority board to provide oversight on rate increases and contracts of the DWSD. The board would be structured in the same format as the Michigan Public Service Commission.

The authority of the DWSD will remain with the City of Detroit.

“The DWSD system was built by ratepayers in the suburban and city neighborhoods,” Toy said. “This legislation is needed now to establish accountability in a system that supplies water to 43% of Michigan residents.”

The new authority board would have five members: one from each Oakland, Macomb and Genesee Counties, appointed by their county board of commissioners; one member from Wayne County elected by the Mayor of Detroit, with the advice and consent of the Detroit City council; and one member from Wayne County elected through a majority vote of the mayors of the five largest cities in Wayne County, excluding Detroit.

SB 195 also protects workers from losing their jobs under the Whistleblowers Protection Act when they take an ethical stand and report safety hazards to the authority board. Workers currently do not have this protection.

SB 195 and HB 4206 passed the Senate by a vote of 23 to 14. They have been sent to the House of Representatives for consideration.

Note: Audio comments from Senator Toy on Senate Bill 195 are available on the Michigan Senate Hotline at (517) 373-4000 or online at the Michigan Senate Republican Audiowire, located at <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/>.